

## The Legend of Maasu

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Voyageur Memorial School

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Grand Chief Coon Come's  
State of the Nation Address

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Reward offered in Sindy  
Ruperthouse investigation

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# All lives matter

by Lyle Stewart

When Tina Lafontaine's lifeless body was pulled from Winnipeg's Red River 18 months ago, the 15-year-old's tragic end helped serve to power calls for a national inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women. As 2016 begins, Canada's new Liberal government is preparing to launch the long-overdue look at why Native women are disproportionately killed and disappeared in Canada.

What is far less known is that Tina Lafontaine's father, Eugene, was himself murdered three years previously, in 2011. That fact is symbolic of a greater truth. As horrific is the murder rate of Aboriginal women in Canada, Aboriginal men here have violent deaths at an even higher rate. Much higher, in fact.

Last November, Statistics Canada reported that, as of 2014, Aboriginal men are being murdered at a rate almost 11 times that of the general population. That's close to twice the rate of Aboriginal women. Indeed, of the 2,500 murdered people in Canada of Native origin between 1982 and 2011, more than 70% of them were male.

"The reality is the homicide rate for Aboriginal men is much higher and has always been much higher," Neil Boyd, director of the School of Criminology at Simon Fraser University, said of the report. "There's a disturbing, unfortunate legacy, and it's something that we all collectively need to put a good deal of effort into trying to resolve."

Let's be clear: We support the need for a far-reaching understanding of why First Nations women are victims of violence and indifference in this country. Women face distinct issues that underlie their exploitation, abuse and, ultimately, their murders.

But many of these issues are part of a general pattern of violence against, and among Aboriginal populations. And we believe that lives of Aboriginal men also matter. The manner of their death should tell us something about the country we live – and die – in.

RCMP statistics regarding this phenomenon are thin. We know that, overall, 83% of male homicides in Canada are ultimately solved. The national police force doesn't break that figure down into Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, however. It's probably safe to assume that the number of solved murders involving male Aboriginal victims is far lower.

But few people ask why that is, much less march in cities across Canada demanding answers. We should.

We should because these lost lives continue to impact those left behind. As the StatsCan report noted, Manitoba has the highest rate of murdered Aboriginals of either sex. That's where Eugene Lafontaine was beaten repeatedly over several hours, tied up and left outside on the Sagkeeng First Nation without a shirt on the cold fall evening he died.

A Manitoba court hearing into his daughter's death heard that Tina went into a freefall after her father's murder. She started "drifting away" from her family, according to one witness, who added she "was not able to cope at all." She ended up on the streets of Winnipeg, where she would herself later be found, murdered, less than three years later.

These two events were connected, and they should remind us that all Aboriginal lives matter. Let's not forget our men.

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photo by  
Stephanie Gordon

# Turning pain into a positive

## Support groups help start a journey of healing and hope for men

by Jesse Staniforth

Wayne Rabbitskin knows too well what can happen when you keep your pain and trauma inside: eight years ago, he lost his job and his house, and ended up homeless. Now Rabbitskin is a certified prevention specialist with Oujé-Bougoumou's National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program. And he is facilitating a new men's support group in Mistissini to help men deal with their darkest moments and begin to heal.

Rabbitskin's alcohol and drug problems were a consequence of keeping his pain to himself. "I was seeing myself in and out of jail," he told *the Nation*. "If I didn't stop I'd probably have ended up incarcerated. I kept on drinking, even though I lost the home and the job and had no money."

It was a painful encounter with his father that set him straight. His father was also homeless, sleeping on the ground in an alley in Val-d'Or.

"That's when I knew where I was going," Rabbitskin recalled. "I told my partner, 'We have to find a way to help ourselves.' That was six years ago – that was the last time I drank, when I saw him."

But it wasn't just his own life that he managed to change. Rabbitskin opened his heart to his father and told him what was happening in his life.

"I told him, 'I'm destroying my life, I'm into drugs, I'm struggling with addiction. This is what's going on. I miss you, dad, and I know

something happened to you at residential school,'" he recounted. "My parents, they were separated for 14 years. About two days after we left, there was a knock on the door, and it was him. He said, 'I thought about what you said, and I want to come home. I'm tired of living the way I'm living.' He quit. That's the last time he drank."

Rabbitskin said his mother waited 14 years for his father to get sober and return home, and they have been together ever since. This story, for Rabbitskin, goes a long way toward explaining the importance of speaking with an open heart – the very reason he's working with the Cree Nation of Mistissini's Building Healthy Communities program to create a men's support group. He wants to get men in Mistissini talking through the pain in their own lives.

"I've been doing some men's sharing circles going on five years now, and there's a lot of First Nations men who have experienced physical and sexual violence as children – within their families, or in residential school, or in the communities," Rabbitskin explained. "Being a victim of violence has a direct impact in their lives in things like addictions, depressions, difficulties in relationships and parenting. And violence, as well. In many cases, the men become part of that cycle of violence by hurting others. There's a lot of our First Nations men, too, who have committed suicide and a



Wayne Rabbitskin

lot who are incarcerated because of what happened to them."

So much of this continued suffering could be redirected into more positive outcomes, Rabbitskin believes, if men are able to express their unresolved traumas and issues. But that doesn't always happen naturally.

"They haven't been able to have an environment where it's safe for them, where they feel okay to let it out instead of suppressing it. When you suppress your emotions and pain, what happened to you in your childhood, if it's not resolved, it'll have some effect in your life."

Holding in the pain, shame, and despair that comes from trauma is toxic, Rabbitskin said, and it will eventually find a way out on its own. But not in a healthy way.

"It can come out verbally," he said. "You utter words to hurt other people, verbal abuse. That's how I started off. I wasn't able to shift that behaviour to something healthy. I was very toxic. I was

**“They haven’t been able to have an environment where it’s safe for them, where they feel okay to let it out instead of suppressing it. When you suppress your emotions and pain, what happened to you in your childhood, if it’s not resolved, it’ll have some effect in your life.”**

looking down on people. I had normalized a lot of negative behaviours and attitudes, even toward women. I was seeing all this going on in my community, and I figured, ‘Okay, this is how we treat our women, and each other.’ That mentality was so prevalent in our communities and in the home.”

For Rabbitskin, it took expressing his feelings and confronting the pain that he lived with, and being willing to ask for help, in order to help him imagine a healthier future.

“By talking it out, and crying it out, I was able to address some of those issues where I had been hiding from my own mother, from my loved ones,” he said. “It had become very destructive in my own growth.”

He hopes other men can have a similar experience together. A previous men’s group he worked with in Nemaska ultimately banded together

to create the Return of the Nishiyuu Walk to End Violence against Women.

“That came out of that program in Nemaska. When we started there were three men. By the sixth month we were up to eight. When we started that journey, there were five men. By the time we got to Mistissini, there were 20 men.”

The first meeting of the Mistissini support group started small, with four men, but Rabbitskin expects it to grow quickly.

“There are other men who want to go. I know this kind of stuff – it evolves. I’m hoping it’ll come out into another walk or a journey, another program. It usually comes from them.”

The Mistissini group meets every second Wednesday at the Maamuu Building, next to the post office, at 7:00 pm.

**Happy New Year 2016! ᐃ የጀነት ᐃ የጀነት 2016!**



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# RÉCOMPENSE REWARD

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# 40 000\$

Pour toute information pouvant contribuer à élucider le meurtre de Sindy Ruperthouse  
For any information that can help solve the murder of Sindy Ruperthouse

Disparue le 23 avril 2014

Âge: 44 ans au moment de sa disparition

Taille: 1,63 m

Poids: 59 kg

Yeux: bruns

Cheveux: noirs

Missing since April 23nd, 2014

Age: 44 yrs old when she went missing

Height: 5'4"

Weight: 131 lbs

Eye Color: Brown

Hair Color: Black



Sindy Ruperthouse



Le Service des enquêtes sur les crimes contre la personne de la Sûreté du Québec demandent l'aide de la population pour retrouver une femme d'origine autochtone de Val-d'Or. Sindy Ruperthouse a été vue pour la dernière le 23 avril 2014 à Val-d'Or.

*The Investigation Service of crimes against the person of the Sûreté du Québec are asking for help from the public to find an Aboriginal woman in Val-d'Or. Sindy Ruperthouse was seen last April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014 in Val-d'Or.*

## S.V.P APPELEZ / PLEASE CALL 1-800-659-4264

Cette récompense est offerte par un donneur anonyme et expire le 22 juin 2016.

*This reward is offered by an anonymous donor and expires on June 22, 2016.*

Toute information fournie sera analysée et validée par les enquêteurs responsables du dossier (Sûreté du Québec).  
*All information received will be analysed by the police force in charge of the investigation (Sûreté du Québec).*

# Reaching out for help

## A reward ups the ante in Sindy Ruperthouse investigation

by Joshua Grant

Just before Christmas, the Surêté du Québec issued a \$40,000 reward for information regarding the whereabouts of missing Algonquin woman Sindy Ruperthouse. The 45-year-old Ruperthouse was last seen in April 2014 at a Val-d'Or hospital, where she was recovering from a beating that left her with three broken ribs.

Over a year and a half later the Ruperthouse family is still looking for closure.

While father Johnny Wylde says that recently the police have been very helpful and involved, this hasn't always been the case in the handling of his daughter's disappearance.

Wylde told *the Nation* that since Ruperthouse went missing in 2014 there have been three different investigators assigned to the case. The first was based in Amos, who the family heard from a couple of times, and then there was an officer from Rouyn-Noranda who they didn't hear from once. Recently the file was transferred to an investigator in Montreal, who they say calls the family regularly with updates and has even visited Wylde and wife Émilie in their home.

"Now we know what's going on," said Wylde. "He calls me almost every week and we can ask him anything. Now we know him. Before, the other investigators, we didn't even know them, we never saw them."

While Ruperthouse's case has been caught up in the whirlwind of the Val-d'Or crisis, Wylde says that her disappearance is a separate matter.

The allegations of abuse against Native women at the hands of SQ officers were brought to light by the

Radio-Canada investigative program *Enquête*, which was originally looking into the lack of action over Ruperthouse's disappearance when it uncovered the allegations by her friends against SQ officers.

"What's going on in Val-d'Or is not the same thing as what's happening with us, in our family," said Wylde. "But Sindy was friends with those girls in Val-d'Or who talked about the [allegations against the] police."

It appears the case has gone cold, however. The latest notable update as of December is that the investigation is being treated as a murder rather than a disappearance. The only lead to date involved a tip from a Val-d'Or woman who reported a rotten smell in the bush near a road she regularly travelled.

Wylde says that Montreal police looked into the lead but nothing was found. He plans to check again for himself in the spring.

Ruperthouse refused to implicate her then-boyfriend Lévis Landry or press charges for the physical injuries and beatings she endured on a regular basis. Media reports say he refused to take a lie detector test during police questioning.

When asked by *Enquête* if he ever raised a hand against Sindy, Landry replied, "Well, hit her just to hit her? No. But having to grab her to throw her outside, yes. At some point the police would show up. They would show up often when I was with her. They had to come several times following this type of incident."

It's well documented that Ruperthouse was caught up with



Johnny Wylde and Émilie Ruperthouse with Reynolds Ruperthouse, Kathy Ruperthouse and Joan Wylde.

alcohol, drugs and prostitution around Val-d'Or in the later part of her life. But those who knew her say she had a strong personality and left an impression on everyone she interacted with.

For someone who was often seen at local bar Le Manoir and women's shelters such as La Piaule and le Nid, it's strange Ruperthouse would disappear without contacting her family. Her father said she always kept in touch despite her struggles.

When asked how the family was coping, Wylde forced a laugh before saying, "It's difficult."

He acknowledged support from many people and organizations over the past year and a half, including the Cree Nation, the Cree Women of

Eeyou Istchee Association and from the Chief and Councillors in Pikogan.

"We try to listen to people and what they say to us," he said. "We have a lot of support but it's so quiet in the house, it's too difficult. Sometimes if there's nobody here we go outside, we go in town, ride around. Almost every weekend we go for a drive. Sometimes we go to Val-d'Or just in case we see her. Sometimes we even go to Montreal. We go everywhere, looking. That's just the way we live right now."

The \$40,000 reward for information regarding what happened to Ruperthouse or where she may be found was contributed by an anonymous donor and is being administered by Sun Youth Financial.

"The purpose of the poster and the reward is to remind people that in this particular investigation the police still need their help," said Sun Youth communications director Tommy Kulczyk. "When the picture comes out with the call for information, that little thing you saw that you didn't think was important might end up being a key piece of information.

"Just imagine it was your sister, your daughter, a member of your family. Everybody who can help should share any information they might have. No piece of information is too small."

## Fire Protection honours grads

The Capital Works and Services Department of the Cree Nation Government (CNG) celebrated the graduation of a new group of Cree firefighters, instructors and inspectors December 4 with a buffet dinner and gala at the Hilton Lac-Leamy Hotel in Gatineau, Quebec.

Over 200 family members, friends, peers and CNG representatives witnessed the certification of 57 firefighter I (FFI) graduates, 12 fire service instructors levels 1 and 2, and 10 fire service investigators.

The candidates were part of the École nationale des pompiers du Québec (ENPQ) training program in Eeyou Istchee. FFI students completed the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) base program, Firefighter Training Program level 1001.

Graduate instructors are now certified to teach and assess firefighting programs (NFPA 1041), while new fire investigators have the credentials to collect, process, analyze and present evidence from the scene of a fire. (NFPA 1043).

Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come and Capital Works and Services director Henry Mianscum both



Cree Firefighter Gala photo by Charles House

attended the ceremony. Regional Fire Marshal Lee-Roy Blacksmith and Regional Fire Preventive Officer George Cox presented the successful candidates with their certificates. ENPQ Director of Operations Benoit Laroche offered his congratulations in a closing speech.

With 122 certified firefighters throughout the Cree Nation, the Capital Works and Services Department is on pace to exceed its goal of 135 firefighters (15 in each community) working throughout the Cree Nation by the end of 2016.

"In a short time, we have been very successful in implementing our objectives," said fire protection consultant Evelyn Horsky. "It is thanks to the hard work of all the fire departments in the Cree communities, and the support of their local councils. We are also grateful that the Department of Capital Works and Services has undertaken this enormous task and it is a tribute to Director Henry Mianscum that so much has been accomplished in such a short time for the Fire Protection Services in the Cree Nation."

## Long-distance mental-health care

Routine and reliable mental-health care remains out of reach for most in Eeyou Istchee. With technological developments, however, the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay (CBHSSJB) hopes to make it a great deal easier in the year to come.

The answer, says the CBHSSJB's Philippe Lubino, is "telehealth" – consultations via live video feed over fibre-optic cable, making it possible for doctors located in the south to provide care to patients in Eeyou Istchee in real time.

"We believe that psychiatry and psychology are two areas where telehealth will have a big impact on the delivery of care for patients," said Lubino.

Until now, patients had only two options of how to receive psychiatric or psychological care.

"Either you have to fly patients down south; those patients have to stay for quite some time, and then they go back

to their communities," Lubino explained. "The second kind of care is that a psychologist or psychiatrist comes to the communities. But those visits happen only a few times a year. Between two visits, what are the services that a patient can access?"

Now mental-health professionals can maintain regular contact with their patients and keep a close watch on their mental states. It's important for patients to see the same physicians who know their files, rather than cycling through different doctors according to who is available. Telehealth also helps doctors increase their efficiency. Travelling north is expensive and time-consuming.

The pilot telehealth project began in Chisasibi two years ago, but Lubino said that the target is for every community where fibre-optic Internet technology has been installed to have access to the service within the next year. (He notes that fibre-optic technology is not yet available in Whapmagoostui, Eastmain and Waskaganish.)



# State of the Cree Nation

## Grand Chief Coon Come re-examines the past year with its highs and lows

by Amy German

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The past year had more than its normal share of triumphs and tribulations for the Grand Chief of the Cree, Matthew Coon Come.

Pushing Quebec to respect the Baril-Moses Agreement, winning a historic agreement with Val-d'Or to fight racism and abuse of marginalized women, and celebrating the 40th anniversary of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement were among his accomplishments in 2015.

But there were difficult moments as well. The loss this year of cherished members of the Cree Nation, the tragedy at Lake Bussy, and the allegations of abuse in Val-d'Or and a disappointing response from the Quebec government were among them.

Here, the Grand Chief reflects on the past year in our annual State of the Cree Nation interview.

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**The Nation:**

**Looking back on 2015, what were your greatest highs and your lowest lows?**

**Grand Chief Coon Come:** It is always a high point when you can identify a problem, work hard to develop a solution, and then see that solution take form in a binding agreement that protects or extends Cree rights. This is what happened this past year in our effort to ensure respect for the Baril-Moses Agreement of 2002. In that agreement Quebec made a commitment to acknowledge Cree rights in an area outside the boundaries of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. After several years of discussions and negotiations with Quebec we arrived at an agreement, which not only reinforced the acknowledgment of Cree rights in the original agreement, but also expanded the range of protected areas



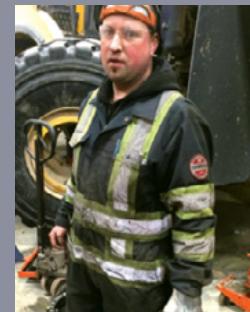
# A Year in the Nation

within Eeyou Istchee. This was another victory for the Cree Nation.

As for the low point, it is very saddening when we have worked so hard over the last number of years to improve relations with Quebec, and to develop mutually respectful attitudes and practices together with our neighbours in the region which demonstrate inclusiveness and a desire for harmonious relations, that we encountered the difficult situation in Val-d'Or with very serious allegations of sexual abuse toward Indigenous women on the part of the SQ. It has been a reminder that although we can all make commitments and pronouncements about "new eras" and "new beginnings", the more difficult task of changing attitudes and moving beyond old ways of thinking is a longer process and we need to keep in mind that sometimes progress in these areas is slower than we would like. But this is a challenge that we must take on and one where we must make progress.

“...the more difficult task of changing attitudes and moving beyond old ways of thinking is a longer process and we need to keep in mind that sometimes progress in these areas is slower than we would like.

The other low point this past year has, of course, been the loss of two of the pioneers in the recent history of the Cree Nation. We have lost Gertie Murdoch whose commitment to education of our Cree youth was steadfast and unwavering since the establishment of the Cree School Board and who left her mark on so many of us. We also have lost one of our early contributors to the negotiations of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, and long-time Returning Officer, Lawrence Jimiken whose vast experience and wise counsel will also be missed by both his community of Nemaska and by the Cree Nation.



**January:** Tawich makes Cree safety clothing. Goldcorp first customer



**February:** Dispute over CSB bussing contract goes to court.



**February:** Quebec Bar says justice system failing in the north, though the fact that the Cree have created numerous new justice facilities and programs was largely excluded from its report.

**April:** Eeyou Istchee mourns the deaths of five hunters in a cabin fire at Lake Bussy.



**May:** The celebration of the 25th anniversary of the voyage of the Odeyak.

## How has the Cree economy fared?

As a Nation, we continue to enjoy employment which is derived from the administration of our local governments, our regional Cree government and our Cree entities. This continues to be a positive aspect of our overall development. However, as I have said many times over the last few years, these administrative positions can only absorb a limited number of Cree people in our workforce.

In order to address the needs of a large number of younger Crees just entering the workforce, and those who will be entering the workforce in the future, we need to look to economic development as the future source of employment. The economic aspect of addressing our housing needs will be a significant contributor to the overall Cree economy and this represents yet one more reason for us to develop a financially sound and effective initiative with respect to the housing needs in our communities.

To take full advantage of all the opportunities within Eeyou Istchee for the creation of future employment, we need to prepare our people. This is why I have been saying for a long time that capacity-building is among our highest priority. And by extension, it is our youth who we must focus on to develop the skills to take the jobs which are available within the region in the area of resource development and other kinds of development which are now, and which will be, part of our future landscape.

I cannot overstate the importance of this for our future. We will be continuing with our capacity-building initiative in order to drive this message home to our youth. If we are successful in doing all these things, our economic future is a bright one filled with opportunities and successes.

## And the environment of Eeyou Istchee?

In recognition of the central importance for our Cree people of our relationship to the land, and our obligation to protect the land, this principle informs everything we do as a Cree Nation and as a Cree Nation Government.

We have continued to defend our position on uranium mining and we will not stop being vigilant on this issue. The position of the Cree Nation in support of Mistissini is clear and we will do everything necessary to ensure that this position is respected.

We have also concluded an important IBA [impact benefit agreement] with Nemaska related to a lithium-mining project within the community's traditional territory. All of our IBAs – Goldcorp, BlackRock, Nemaska Lithium, Stornoway – are negotiated so that they include an important component in them to take into account the concerns of our hunters and trappers about environmental impacts, monitoring and mitigation.

And, as I mentioned earlier, we have successfully extended Cree rights on our hunting territories in areas outside the JBNQA territory with the conclusion of an agreement to resolve the Baril-Moses Agreement and in doing so we have also extended protective measures for parts of the Broadback River watershed.

We will continue to identify all possible avenues for furthering our commitment to environmental protection.



**May:** N'we Jinan releases first albums of Cree recording artists Mariame and the Northstars.



**June:** In its summary report, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission says the residential school system was "cultural genocide." The final report would be issued in December.



**June:** Mistissini Pentecostal congregation divided over competing claims to Living Water Assembly Church. Pictured: Pastor Joseph Blacksmith

## **Cree well-being is a concern, as well.**

We will be talking a lot in the next year about the housing situation in our communities and what to do to address the unacceptable backlog of housing and what to do about our current housing needs. There are many aspects of the health of our people that are related to housing issues. Overcrowding and its consequences have an impact on a wide range of health concerns as well as social issues. This area must, and will, become uppermost in our minds over the next year. We will be coming forward with some new initiatives over the next year to begin to address this issue.

Diabetes continues to be a serious concern. We are looking forward to welcoming new initiatives from our Cree Health Board to address this epidemic in a way that is effective for our communities and respectful of our culture and traditions.

Having said all this, we have made very major strides in improving the living conditions and the standard of living in our communities when compared against Indigenous communities across the country. Although we still have a great deal to do we should not lose sight of the fact that we have also come a very long way and that in many ways we are better off than many of our Indigenous brothers and sisters throughout Canada. But we will continue to make progress and we will continue to set new benchmarks.

*It has been several weeks since the Val-d'Or scandal began. What do you feel has to happen next for the boycott to be lifted?*

As you may know, we have just very recently held serious meetings with the city of Val-d'Or to discuss a wide range of issues surrounding the allegations of abuse of Indigenous women in the region by SQ officers. These discussions have resulted in the Val-d'Or city council passing a resolution committing the city to become a member of the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination.

They also passed a resolution calling on the Government of Quebec to establish a provincial commission of inquiry into discrimination and racism in the public security forces and the justice system in Quebec. The city has put into place some new initiatives to bring about change in the relationship between the city's population and Indigenous peoples of the region. These initiatives include such things as diversity campaigns, cultural awareness sessions and a review of the city's policies.

I certainly welcome these announcements and I applaud the initiatives. However, these initiatives alone will not resolve the underlying systemic issues that have come to light in recent months. Precisely because the problem is systemic it is not just Val-d'Or's problem and Quebec will need to demonstrate the same kind of willingness to address the underlying issues.

Because of the seriousness with which the city of Val-d'Or is now taking this issue I would feel comfortable lifting the current moratorium, which the Cree Nation has adopted toward the city. They have clearly received our message that our Cree spending power cannot be taken for granted and that the recent revelations must be addressed very seriously.

**July: BOC/Creeco golf tournament raises \$43,000 for Willie's Place, a day centre for the homeless in Val-d'Or.**



**July: The late Lawrence Jimikin left his mark on the Cree Nation.**



**August: Quebec's environmental review board (BAPE) backs the Cree position in rejecting uranium mine in the Otish Mountains. Cree youth would be honoured in Washington, DC in October for their struggle against uranium development in Eeyou Istchee.**

## **With Crees staying away from Val-d'Or, can you estimate their losses?**

The purpose of our moratorium was to send that very clear message that attitudes toward Indigenous peoples in the region need to change. That message has been received. It was not our intent to damage the economy of Val-d'Or so we haven't really done an analysis of the economic impact of our message, but I am certain that the impact on Val-d'Or has been well into the many millions of dollars.

## **How did it feel to celebrate the Grand Council's 40th anniversary?**

The celebration of the 40th anniversary of the signing of the JBNQA was a very touching event. We had the opportunity to see and hear from so many of our people who were involved in the negotiations at the time and it was a fitting opportunity to acknowledge and express our gratitude to so many. Our last 40 years have been unprecedented and remarkable in our fervent belief that by staying firmly committed to our understanding of Cree rights that it is possible to have these rights recognized and made into tangible benefits for our people. Celebrations like this give us the opportunity to reflect not only on the past and appreciate just how far we have come as an Indigenous Nation, but also to look forward and imagine what our future as a Cree Nation could look like.

## **How has the change in federal leadership impacted the people in Eeyou Istchee?**

Whenever there is a change in government leadership where there are positive signals about the way in which Indigenous issues will be dealt with, it will be positive for the Cree people. The new prime minister has sent a number of these positive signals. He has talked about his willingness to fully adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, he has stated his desire to implement all of the 94 recommendations in the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and he has announced the establishment of a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

These are all very positive signs for Indigenous peoples across the country and we will see if that same spirit of openness and commitment will translate into positive actions and initiatives, which provide benefits for Indigenous communities. And, of course, we will see if that same spirit will enter into our own dealings with the federal government on specific issues.

### **September: Mistissini Fishing derby**



**October: Provincial and federal approval reached for Nemaska's Whabouchi mining project as Nemaska Lithium Inc. signs Chinuchi agreement with Nemaska First Nation and the Cree Nation Government.**



**October: Waswanipi teams up with Greenpeace to protect the Broadback River Valley with online petition at [www.savethebroadback.ca](http://www.savethebroadback.ca).**

## What are you looking forward to in 2016?

I am of course looking forward to continuing to ensure that the issues surrounding the Val-d'Or revelations are dealt with in a manner that is respectful of the women who have come forward and that is respectful of the many missing and murdered Indigenous women. I will continue to urge Quebec, in every way that I can, to launch a provincial inquiry that will honestly address the issues which have come to light. I will also keep a close eye on the developments related to the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. I have made a commitment to the women of Eeyou Istchee and I will keep that commitment.

I also look forward to assuming chairmanship of the regional government for the next two years. As you know, the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government is structured in such a way that the chair of the regional government rotates every two years between a Cree representative and a Jamésien representative. It will be an honour for me to assume the chair for the next two years and continue the work of the regional government for the benefit of everyone who resides within Eeyou Istchee.

I am hopeful that this coming year will be the year when we can get our Cree Development Corporation up and running so that we can take full advantage of the opportunities available to the Cree Nation to become actively involved in the economic development in the region and to provide employment and incomes for our people.

I am also looking forward to the development of a Cree Nation approach to housing for our people. This has, as everyone knows, been a growing problem for our communities and I look forward to presenting a major initiative in this area. We have been having many discussions internally about the best approach to adopt to address both the current needs as well as the significant backlog of housing requirements. I hope to have something to announce in this coming year.

I will also be keeping an eye on the national situation to see if there is any contribution that we can make, based on the experiences of the Cree Nation, to furthering the cause of Indigenous rights across Canada and for the benefit of our Indigenous brothers and sisters.

So I think there will be a lot to do to keep us all very busy next year.

**October:** Waswanipi's Romeo Saganash is re-elected as NDP Member of Parliament for Abitibi–Baie-James–Nunavik–Eeyou.



**November:** The 40th anniversary of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement is celebrated in Mistissini where on June 29, 1971 Cree leaders and delegates met for the first time.



**November-December:** After allegations of sexual abuse by several SQ officers against First Nations women in Val-d'Or, a crisis of confidence erupts in the Quebec government's ability to control its own police force. Cree Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come blasts the provincial government for failing to call a judicial inquiry into the scandal. A Cree Nation Government boycott against the city of Val-d'Or is called off in December after the municipal council agrees to a landmark agreement to fight anti-Aboriginal racism.



# Taapwaauchaayimiisu

# The Cree Alternative Suspension Program

## **Improving the Educational Journey for our Youth**

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## THE ALTERNATIVE SUSPENSION PROGRAM

The YMCA Alternative Suspension program was first developed by the YMCAs of Québec in Montreal in 1999. The program was created as a response to concerns raised in an inner – city neighborhood where the community had grown weary of the number of students being suspended and left without any supervision.

To date, the program has expanded to over 40 communities across Québec and Canada, and partnerships have been created with over 35 school boards, 350 schools, 300 community partners actively supporting over 3,000 students each year.

## *Program Benefits*

### *For the suspended student:*

- Supervision by qualified youth workers
- Staying up-to-date with their schoolwork
- A time-out and a time to reflect
- Return-to-school accompaniment

*For the participating school:*

- An additional resource

- Continuity in the educational process
- Greater awareness for students
- A service adapted to the student and school needs

### **For the community:**

- Youth not left unsupervised
- An approach that helps improve school and social integration
- Community actors mobilized around youth
- Youth referred to the resources in their community

## THE CREE ALTERNATIVE SUSPENSION PROGRAM

The YMCA program's philosophy is focused on youth engagement, education, and perseverance at school. The Cree Nation Government Department of Justice and Correctional Services and Cree School Board are proud to partner with the YMCA to develop a Cree Alternative Suspension program, which adapts the model using culturally appropriate content and taking into consideration the history and realities of the Cree Nation.

## ***A Pilot Project in Three Cree Communities***

The Cree program will begin as a one-year pilot in schools in 3 Cree communities: Chisasibi, Waskaganish, and Mistissini. Targeted 12-17 years old students are those who are temporarily suspended for a period of 3 to 5 days. The Cree program primary youth worker will help students stay in school through two components:

1. A time of reflection allowing each student to change his/her attitude toward school and turn it into a positive one.
2. Develop and improve social skills and self confidence.

### ***A Variety of Activities***

Day-to-day program activities include individual meetings, a time to do schoolwork, and various group workshops, all prepared according to the student's needs and embracing the Cree culture and language.

Workshops cover issues such as addictions and health, education and employment, social skills, and violence, intimidation and conflict.



### ***An Image is Worth A Thousand Words***

To facilitate program adoption in the Cree communities, a personalized version of the program logo has been created, tying in with the existing YMCA Program visual branding, color scheme and font.

Alongside the traditional beaver pelt drying loom, the snowshoes, like the program, provide support and stability to facilitate the youth's journey and help them reach their destination. The expression "Believe in yourself", in Cree syllabics, also sends a strong message of empowerment and self worth to the youth.



## **JOINING THE CREE PROGRAM**

### ***Investing in the Child***

School suspensions can be a setback for both the students and the school. Providing assistance during a suspension constitutes an opportunity to have an impact on students while their problems are still in the early stages. Youth that are referred to the Alternative Suspension Program receive supervision from highly qualified and trained youth workers. Parents who invest in their child at this crucial moment also increase the chances of their child's successfully reintegrating his or her school environment.

Participation in the Alternative Suspension Program is considered a success when students have appreciated their experience because they were listened to, received individual assistance and benefited from being in a validating setting.

### **Interested in Participating?**

If you are interested in contributing to improve the educational journey of the Cree youth by getting involved in or obtaining more information on the Cree Alternative Suspension Program, contact us:

#### **Coordinator of Cree Alternative Suspension Program**

Department of Justice and Correctional Services,  
CNG

**Tel:** (819) 527-0407

**Email:** [Byourself@cngov.ca](mailto:Byourself@cngov.ca)

For participant testimonials and to obtain more information on the YMCA Alternative Suspension Program, visit the YMCA website at

<http://alternativesuspension.ca/en/program>.



Department of Justice and  
Correctional Services, CNG



Cree School Board



# The Legend of Maasu

Grade 3 and 4 students of Voyageur Memorial School illustrate the tale

Cycle Two teachers Stephanie Gordon (Grade 4) and Elaine Drouin (Grade 3) submitted a class project to *the Nation* completed by their students at Voyageur Memorial School in Mistissini. The teachers looked at the Cree legend of Maasu, presented a shortened version of the story to their students and had them create their own visual representations of the following scenes.

Featured in photos are the students and artists responsible for the illustrations.

Grade 3 students: Vernon Gray, Alayna Wapachee, Felix Coon, Alison Blacksmith-Sheshamush, Lorenzo Shecapio, Violet Brien and Sienna Mianscum.

Grade 4 students: Landen Spencer, Elaine Rabbitskin, David Trapper-Gunner, James Coon-Come, Kenyon Awashish-Hunter, Sayge Cheezo, Alison Lazore, Kathleen Coon and Joe Shecapio.

This is the story of how Maasu recreated the world after a big flood.



**Scene 1** Kingfisher is crying because he is hungry. Kingfisher tells Maasu: "The Kaachaamishikunich don't let other animals hunt." Maasu tells the Kingfisher: "I will tell you where you can find plenty of fish to eat."

**Scene 2** Maasu goes to spy on the Kaachaamishikunich. He hides under branches and little trees. They thought they heard something in the trees, so they went and shook the trees violently.



**Scene 3** The Kaachaamishikunich were sleeping. Maasu gets out of his hiding spot. He fought the Kaachaamishikunich with harpoons and lances. But Maasu didn't kill them because he doesn't want the world to be flooded.

**Scene 4** Maasu makes a boat and gets two of each animal to go on it and also different types of vegetation.

photos by Cycle 4 Teacher Stephanie Gordon





**Scene 5** Maasu killed the Kaachaamishikunich. The whole world is flooded but all the animals in the boat are saved.



**Scene 6** The animals on the boat are hungry. Maasu needs sand and a plant to make land where animals can eat.



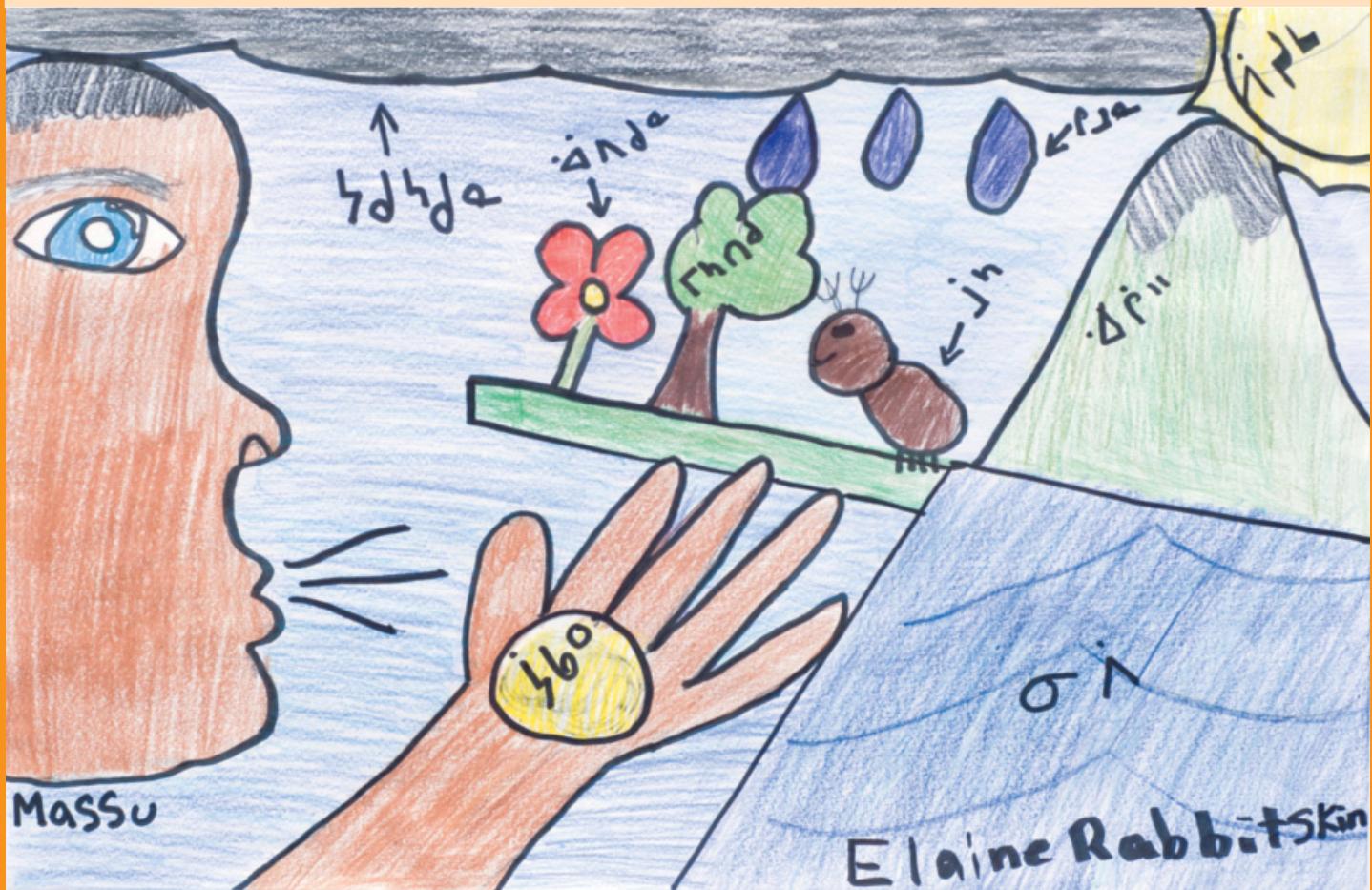


**Scene 7** All the animals try but fail to get sand and plants from the bottom of the water. Only the female otter gets the sand and plants for Maasu.





**Scene 8** Maasu blows on the sand and the plants and creates land. Maasu makes the land big and full of food for the animals.



Read the full text of the legend of Maasu in Cree and in English at [www.eastcree.org/cree/en/stories/text/maasu/](http://www.eastcree.org/cree/en/stories/text/maasu/)

# Breaking the silence

## Quebec Native Women's report on missing and murdered women goes to the source of violence

by Jesse Staniforth

**W**hat came up a lot in the report is how normalized violence is. People feel like it's normal to have experienced violence, or to have been raped, or to have been abused."

Alana Boileau, Justice and Public Security Coordinator for Quebec Native Women, was speaking following the December 14 release of the group's report on the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Quebec, Naniawig Mamawé Ninawind – Stand With Us.

A critical point addressed by the Quebec Native Women report, Boileau said, is that the issue does not begin with the actions of murderers or kidnappers, but rather in a culture of violence created by colonialism – a culture in which it has long been common for women to disappear.

"Disappearance has been a kind of permanent condition in Indigenous women's lives," Boileau said. "Having their status removed and being kicked out of their communities because of the Indian Act until 1985, and the legacies of that until today. Dying in residential schools. Being adopted out of their communities, even losing their children and therefore falling into a pattern that might be harmful, or being adopted one's self and having to leave your commu-

nity. Disappearance has existed in Indigenous women's lives since the beginning of colonization."

And yet one of the most dangerous factors has been the unwillingness of non-Indigenous society to take women seriously, something Boileau said she noticed in the backlash against the Indigenous women who accused Val-d'Or police officers of abusing them.

"My boss, the executive director here, said 'They didn't believe us when we told our stories from residential school, either.' I thought that was such a heartbreakingly statement."

The Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee (CWEI) is working on its own report, Boileau noted, adding that reports from specific Nations and communities are enormously helpful. Though that Cree report is not yet finished, Boileau says her office has been in touch with Cree Justice and CWEI and will provide support as it continues.

The QNW report began with consultations 18 months ago, when Boileau and researcher Annie Bergeron started meeting with elected QNW representatives of each Nation and with the directors of Aboriginal women's shelters across Quebec.

### Regional Radio Show on Housing

from the Capital Works and Services Department / Housing and ownership in the Cree Nation

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**CREE NATION GOVERNMENT  
Gouvernement de la Nation Crie  
CAPITAL WORKS & SERVICES**

"We asked them what our study should look at, who we should speak to, and what kinds of questions we should be asking," she explained. "What really came up was the need to inquire about the violence that Indigenous women experience in general, in non-Aboriginal society, in urban areas, and in their communities. Then we chose to speak to family members first and foremost, and also frontline workers and members of the Aboriginal police corps."

The history is complex, she said, and it begins with the violence of colonialism in the past and in its many forms in the present.

"We need to walk that really delicate line of addressing family violence, addressing violence that is present in communities that sometimes causes women to want to leave their communities, while also recognizing where it comes from, and the fact that one of the reasons it's still here is that there aren't resources in order for services to be available to people who want to heal but don't have access to the support they need," she said.

The approach ruffled feathers in Quebec's government bureaucracy, she noted.

"When we started submitting ideas to the Justice Ministry, one of the people I'm working with there said, 'You're talking about violence in general. We need you to talk just about missing and murdered Indigenous women.' And this is our point: this is missing and murdered Indigenous women. If I only talk about the women who are kidnapped, we're not addressing the issue."

The report concludes with four objectives for healing and improving violence both within communities and between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people. The first of these is a focus on gathering together the families of victims of violence so that they may help and support one another.

The second objective focuses on raising awareness, in particular in the form of sensitivity training for Quebec

service providers both outside and inside Indigenous communities. These include police, frontline workers, nurses and anyone who interacts with Indigenous people and provides them services, said Boileau.

"People don't always know how to work with Indigenous people," she said. "They don't know how to adapt their services – to make Indigenous people feel welcome, and use methods that work for them. It's one thing to know about residential schools, but how does that change the way you do things when you provide services? That transition is not always there."

She noted that Quebec Native Women trains police officers from different Aboriginal police corps, raising awareness about the history of the Indian Act and teaching officers how to intervene in violent situations taking place in Aboriginal settings.

"But moving beyond that into what this means in your everyday practice, that's different."

The third objective is to harmonize services by increasing collaboration between service providers. In many cases, Boileau said, frontline workers and police often have no idea what the other does, even when they're providing services to the same people.

Finally, the report aims for increased solidarity among Indigenous communities working toward non-violence. Quebec Native Women will be publishing a strategic action plan in the New Year. Boileau said that some steps they're considering involve communities signing non-violence declarations or organizing annual marches. All projects will aim to motivate communities to rally around the cause of non-violence in an atmosphere where, she said, people too often consider violence to be a normal part of life.

"What's most important is that people try to break the silence," said Boileau. "We need to talk about violence."

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3. Help encourage the Crees and Cree enterprises benefit from Quebec's regular funding programs as well as other provincial assistance allocated to mineral exploration activities.
4. Act as main intermediary between offers and demands of services made to Cree enterprises in matters relating to mineral exploration.

All the best for the  
coming year 2016

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## Record Suspension Program

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If you are a Cree beneficiary, the Cree Nation Government (CNG) can help you to fill out the record suspension application and if you qualify for financial assistance, the CNG may pay the costs associated with the application.

### Need Help on How to Apply?

#### Contact your Local Community Reintegration Officer:

Chisasibi:	819-855-2120
Eastmain:	819-977-2400
Mistissini:	418-923-2661
Nemaska:	819-673-2400
Ouje-bougoumou:	418-745-2260
Waskaganish:	819-895-2126
Waswanipi:	819-753-2770
Wemindji:	819-978-3300
Whapmagoostui:	819-929-3796

If you have any additional questions or need more information, please contact the Correctional Services Regional Office in Val d'or at 819-874-2600 or by email at [justice.valdor@cngov.ca](mailto:justice.valdor@cngov.ca).

[www.creejustice.ca](http://www.creejustice.ca)



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# The road to ruin?

## Waswanipi Council warns road project threatens Broadback and caribou herds

by Jeremy East

After considerable debate and a last-minute postponement, a date finally has been set for Waswanipi Council's latest battle in the fight for new environmental protection measures throughout the Broadback Forest. The Environmental and Social Impact Review Committee (COMEX) will hold a public hearing to discuss the construction of new access roads in the Broadback Forest on Tuesday, January 19.

The forest access roads in question were initially proposed in 2009 by a group of companies that includes Matériaux Blanchet Inc., Scierie Landrienne, Tembec, Eacom Timber Corporation, and Resolute Forest Products. All five of the companies have forestry interests in the region.

COMEX's public hearing in Waswanipi was originally scheduled for December 8, but that date was pushed back after the Waswanipi Council raised concerns with the environmental impact assessment for the potential forest road project. That assessment, carried out by EnviroCree Ltd., found that there would be negligible to moderate negative impact on the area's biophysics environment (flora, fauna), and negligible to high benefits to the area's social environment (like economy and use of the territory by Crees).

However, Waswanipi Council has expressed serious concerns regarding the timing of the assessment. It was carried out over two months in 2009 and 2010 – almost six years ago.

"We strongly feel that such an important topic which could bring long and permanent changes to our traditional lands has to be discussed with current and relevant information," wrote Chief Marcel Happyjack in correspondence with COMEX. The Chief has requested that an updated environmental impact assessment be provided before a public hearing on the project is held.

Over 30,000 km of access roads have cut through Waswanipi territory over the last 40 years, which is home to some of the province's oldest untouched forests and bogs. Happyjack and the rest of the council have spent years campaigning for the protection of the Broadback and Waswanipi's ancestral territory. They say recent satellite images show that 90% of that area has already been cut or fragmented by the forest industry.

An agreement on forest protection in Cree territory, including the Broadback, was reached between the Grand Council and the Quebec government in July 2015.



Although the Cree Nation Government lauded the agreement, Waswanipi Council maintains that it doesn't go far enough to ensure protection from the forest industry. They have since set up a task force to address the conservation of the Broadback.

Strategies to conserve the woodland caribou herds have also become a part of debate surrounding new forest access roads in the area. A recently released review by the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) said that conservation efforts in the province are moving too slowly to ensure protection and recovery of caribou populations, given continuing industrial pressures.

"We are not opposing the agreement, but we are demanding more protected areas than those included in the accord," said Deputy Chief Mandy Gull. "What we have now is not enough. Major improvements are necessary if we are to address the survival of the caribou herds, climate change and, of course, our way of life as Cree people, that is, hunting, fishing and trapping."

Community members are invited to attend COMEX's public hearing in Waswanipi to express their concerns and opinions on the forest access road project. They will also be provided with additional information on the environmental impact assessment that was conducted. The hearing will be held January 19 at 2 pm in the Waswanipi Community Centre. Simultaneous Cree, English and French translations will be available on-site for the duration of the hearing.



The **National Indian Brotherhood Trust Fund** is accepting applications for education programs aimed at healing and reconciliation. These funds have been made available from a surplus of the compensation allocated for former students of Indian residential schools, consistent with the terms of the 2007 Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.

Applications are available to First Nation and Métis individuals, governments and organizations. Preference will be given to applicants who are former Indian residential school students.

Group applications are available now with a deadline of January 15, 2016. Individual applications will be available in Spring 2016.

For more information please contact the National Indian Brotherhood Trust Fund directly.

Toll Free: 1-888-268-0520 • Fax: 613-686-6757  
Email: [info@nibtrust.ca](mailto:info@nibtrust.ca) • [www.nibtrust.ca](http://www.nibtrust.ca)

## PUBLIC HEARING IN WASWANIPI



## et du Nord québécois

### Review Committee

# Construction of a forest access road in Sections H West and I

COMEX announces a public hearing on the construction project for a forest road in Sections H West and I, which involves building a pair of major access roads over a total approximate distance of 126 km in the km 105 sector of the Route de la Baie-James (Route 109) and Lake Quénonisca. COMEX will receive written briefs and/or oral comments from interested parties at the following public hearing:

## **WASWANIPI Community Centre**

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2016 at 2:00 PM**

Information about the public hearing and the project itself is available at: <http://comexqc.ca/en>

For further information, please call COMEX  
418-521-3933, ext. 7254 or send an email to  
[secretariat.comex@mddelcc.gouv.qc.ca](mailto:secretariat.comex@mddelcc.gouv.qc.ca)



# Patient Services hosts Christmas lunch

by Joshua Grant

The Cree Board of Health's Cree Patient Services department held a Christmas lunch on December 17 at Hotel Espresso for patients and escorts in Montreal over the holidays. The hotel serves as one of the CPS locations for patients facing mobility issues or requiring isolation for certain physical or mental conditions.

Close to 50 people attended the event. Staff, escorts, patients and their family members enjoyed a buffet-style meal and a prize draw courtesy of Hotel Espresso owners.

Recently retired director Caroline Rosa was on hand and is leaving Cree Patient Services after 15 years as its director and 11 years of service as a nurse in Waskaganish.

"I enjoyed every year," said Rosa. "We help a lot of people in Chisasibi, Val-d'Or, Chibougamau and Montreal; we have an average of 300 clients a day."

While Rosa is unsure of who will be stepping in to fill her position as director she hopes her successor will help ensure the health system empowers its clients. She says doctors should be informing their patients of the options available to them and the consequences should they



Ruth Angatookaluk

decide not to pursue treatment. This would leave the ultimate choice to the client rather than forcing them to see a specialist or making them feel guilty should they decide not to follow through.

Rosa also noted that Hotel Espresso and the CPS have developed a great relationship over the years. The Montreal lunch is held at the hotel every year and the hotel owners always donate the prizes given to attendees.



Matthew Rabbitskin collects a camera won by his wife Philomene Swallow



Philip Matoush draws a winner for the Espresso Hotel raffle

# Vegetable solutions

**The Make Your Own Rules Cookbook is about eating right and light**

by Amy German

After several weeks of indulgence over the holidays, most of us feel our clothes a little tighter. If you're looking for a simple guidebook to healthy eating to help lighten the load in the New Year, check out Tara Stiles' *Make Your Own Rules Cookbook*.

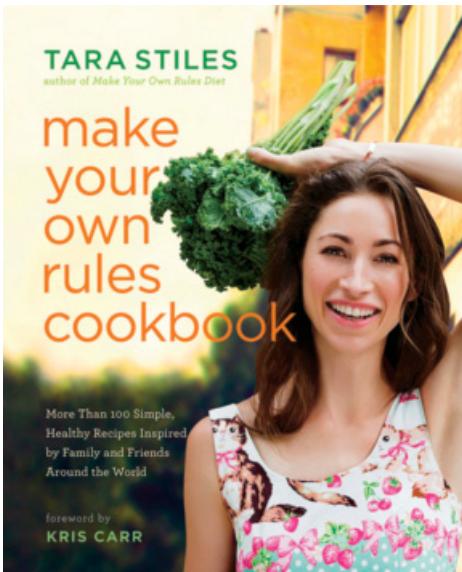
Stiles' book contains vegan recipes, but even if a strict vegan

diet is not your choice, especially in Eeyou Istchee, there are a number of tasty dishes here to help you shed pounds and live a healthier lifestyle. Her recipes call for fresh foods that are virtually cholesterol free and ideal for anyone who is lactose intolerant. Not everything in it is so exotic that it is impossible to find the ingredients.

For that matter, Stiles' book features several simple vegetable-based meals that can serve as a side dish to a large family meal. Bright, colourful and full of lighter fare that makes nutrition fun, Stiles' easy and breezy approach makes for a wonderful read.

Why not give her goods a try with the following three recipes:





## Lazy Lentils

The deliciousness of my mom's homemade soups was always a wonderful mystery. From the preparation of her chopping veggies and setting out spices to the first yummy scents of nourishment to come as it simmered, the soup-making process left me with the impression that it was incredibly complex. Now that my mom simply slips me recipe cards for the dishes that were such staples of my childhood, the mysteries are a little bit lifted, but the magic still remains. I see how simple and cost-effective eating well can be. It makes sense that I pretty much have re-created this cooking style on my own since my early years in New York City before returning to the original source. Thanks, Mom, for your Lazy Lentils.

Serves 2

1 large red onion, chopped  
 3 carrots, cut into bite-size pieces  
 3 stalks celery, cut into bite-size pieces  
 2 tablespoons olive oil  
 4 cups vegetable broth  
 2 cups lentils, rinsed well  
 2 bay leaves  
 1 teaspoon ground coriander  
 1 teaspoon dried tarragon  
 ½ teaspoon curry powder  
 1 teaspoon ground red pepper flakes  
 1 teaspoon sea salt

Sauté the onion, carrots, and celery in the olive oil in a large saucepan until the onions brown.

Add the rest of the ingredients to the saucepan. Add water if needed to cover the veggies and lentils completely.

Bring to a boil and simmer for 20 minutes.

## Vera's Borscht

I have several amazing Russian women in my life. I don't know how exactly it happened, but it happened all at once, and it's been pretty awesome. It all has revolved around the Strala studio in New York City. I've learned how to knit; to grow things; to stay warm, hearty, and strong; to speak some conversational Russian; and to perform a few secret tricks that, if I tell you, I'll have to kill you. Just kidding on the last one. My friend Vera, who teaches at Strala in Los Angeles now, made her famous borscht for me when I visited. It's amazing how it made the whole house feel warm and cozy, and I loved the feeling of saving so many resources and using simple ingredients to make such a hearty meal. You can get into the real Russian spirit by adding a side of vodka to wash it down. Keeps you even warmer.

Serves 4

1 red onion, chopped  
 1 teaspoon olive oil  
 1 carrot, shredded  
 1 beet, shredded  
 Juice of ½ lemon  
 2 tomatoes, chopped  
 2 cloves garlic, minced  
 4 cups vegetable broth  
 2 to 3 bay leaves  
 1 pinch peppercorns  
 2 medium potatoes, peeled and chopped  
 1 cup kidney beans  
 1 small cabbage, chopped  
 ½ bell pepper, chopped  
 1 cup parsley, chopped  
 1 bunch beet greens (optional)  
 1 teaspoon sour cream (optional)

Sauté the onion in the olive oil in a frying pan until golden brown.

Add the carrot and beet, and squeeze the lemon juice over the mixture.

Add the tomatoes and garlic.

Cook for a few more minutes and set the mixture aside.

Boil the vegetable broth in a medium saucepan.

Add the bay leaves and peppercorns to the saucepan.

Add the potatoes to the saucepan and cook for a few minutes.

Add the carrot-beet mixture to the saucepan and bring to a boil.

Stir in the beans, cabbage, bell pepper, and, if using, beet greens, slowly letting everything simmer for a minute between ingredients.

Cover and let it sit off the stove for a few minutes before serving.

Top with the parsley. Serve with the sour cream, if using.



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## We can all help make 2016 a good year

**H**appy New Year and welcome to 2016! As a First Nation person I can tell you that I feel very good about the coming new year. What a change in terms of my people right across the country starting a new and more positive relationship with the federal government.

Much has changed for Aboriginal people in this country with the election of Justin Trudeau as prime minister. If all of the election promises his Liberal Party made are honoured, we certainly will be having a great 2016.

It's working out so far. Prime Minister Trudeau recently announced a new approach to working with Aboriginal people in a partnership he called a sacred obligation. That is certainly a big change from how things operated with Stephen Harper's Conservative government for the past decade.

Trudeau also announced the Liberal government would be going ahead with the promised federal inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. This is a huge commitment to Aboriginal people across Canada. Too many families have for far too long wondered what happened to their loved ones.

The sources of these tragedies often have to do with racism, devastating conditions of poverty and lack of opportunity in First Nation communities – not to mention past federal and provincial government policies and colonization.

Trudeau also lifted a 2% cap on federal funding to First Nation communities, which had been in place for almost 20 years, because it did not keep up with actual growth and needs in the First Nations. He also committed to more funding for education. We as First Nation

people need to make sure our young people have safe, positive, culturally sensitive education programs and schools that are at least on par with those offered in non-Native communities.

Trudeau's recent appearance before an Assembly of First Nations (AFN) meeting was the first by a prime minister since his father, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, was in power. At the AFN meeting Trudeau committed to implementing all the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, starting with adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and to review all legislation unilaterally imposed on Indigenous peoples by the previous government.

Politically, we Aboriginal have a lot to celebrate. But we still need to maintain support for our leaders at the community level, tribal council levels, regional, provincial and national levels to hold the government to account.

We must remember that powerful interests in our country will do their best to limit what Trudeau and his government will do for First Nations and the population of Canada. So don't throw out your Idle No More signs just yet. Keep them handy as we need to continue with our fight for fairness to our people, protection for the land, waters, air we breathe and Mother Earth's creatures.

Let's face it: the big-money guys are still pushing the buttons of power, and it is up to us and the citizens of Canada to provide Trudeau with the support he needs to push these bullies back. Thankfully, we still have a healthy New Democratic Party opposition that will hopefully put aside most differences to make sure that good deeds are done for

the people of Canada over the next few years. It is still up to us to help make sure these good deeds are done.

I was born and raised on a remote First Nation so I can tell you firsthand how difficult that was. When most Canadians were living lives with good employment, education opportunities and all the modern conveniences of a civilized society I was dealing with very sad, sometimes tragic and poverty stricken realities.

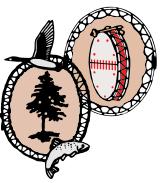
Some will excuse all that by saying that this was another time, when attitudes of racism, bigotry and colonialism were so negative and nasty. Yet, just look at what has transpired over the past decade in terms of First Nations being bullied by government and you have to admit not much has changed. We all need a way to move forward and with this new Liberal government in place and a young leader with some vision of good for the people it just might happen. He will need our help every step of the way.

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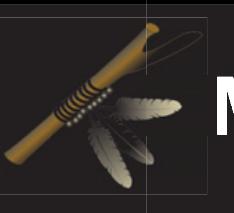
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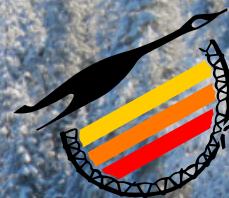
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